

Prolusion

Document belonging to the Greek Mythology Link, a web site created by **Carlos Parada**, author of *Genealogical Guide to Greek Mythology*

Theogony and Cosmogony

“**Creation**” means, in this context, **Creation of the World**, which is *also* called **Cosmogony** or Origin of the Universe (Cosmos). Cosmogony *normally* includes, not only *an account of the origin of the world*, but also *a description of its physical qualities*, declaring, for example, whether there is light or darkness in Cosmos, or of which parts it is formed. Likewise **Theogony** (Origin of the Godlings) does not limit itself to give an account of their coming into being, but it also establishes their number and describes their nature and functions.

Cosmos created through Emphatic Love and Sexual Intercourse

Cosmogony and Theogony cannot be completely separated because the myths have established that the *parts of the Cosmos are gods*, saying, for example, *that* the Earth (Gaia) and Sky (Uranus) are at the same time *realities and deities endowed with power and intelligence* which be the exclusive attribute of the Divine. For this reason, the Cosmos may be said to have been created by the gods, yet not as a result of the work of constructors or demiurges, but through “*emphatic love*” and “*sexual intercourse*.” **Primeval Chaos**, a “void” equaled with “disorder,” appears sometimes as a being capable of intercourse and *procreation*. Likewise **Tartarus**, a gloomy place in the **Underworld**, being “*as far distant from earth as earth is from the sky*” (**Hesiod**, Theogony 720), has fathered several creatures.

Creation and Procreation

Since **Cosmos** is not a lifeless stage where actors perform their deeds, but, *instead*, the stage and the actors at the same time (insomuch as *if* these actors were *immortal divinities*), it may be asserted *that* the *myths* make no difference between Cosmogony and Theogony, nor betwixt Cosmos or godlings. For e’en as the godlings create new realities of Cosmos by consorting with each other, and these new segments, being gods themselves, are *in this sense* both created and procreated. Therefore, the *mythical accounts*, though differing in their details, regard **Creation** and **Procreation** as *one and the same thing*. In this view, “creation is the outcome of an encounter, and genesis is a product of interaction.” (Arnold **Toynbee**, *A Study of History*)

Night without a Starry Sky

But if the different material parts or ethereal godlings are created through *procreation*, then there were times when some of them did not exist, being the children of those who came before them. So, for example, when **Nyx** (Night) appeared in the world, there was *no starry sky* by night, since there was no **Sky** (Uranus) at the moment, and the stars were yet to be born. Going thus aback in the chain of creation and/or procreation, one should come to the ultimate ancestor, or as some have said *afterwards*, a first cause. Some have called this ancestor **Chaos**, whereas others have called him otherwise, or *also* pointed out several simultaneous ancestors. Nevertheless, some beginning is often found, either in Chaos or in them.

Beginning or Naught

Now, what is before the origin of a self-conceived beginning remains unknown, for nobody has explained whence **Chaos** [] quick became, and the poet only asserted:

“In truth at first Chaos came to be...”

(Hesiod, Theogony 116).

... without ever declaring how Chaos became quick!? some have found it an aberration to assume *that Chaos came out of nothingness*; for then Chaos, being the first realization of identity (*whether mortal or demigod or godling or alien*), an infantile recognition of being and having no remembrance of non-existence, knowing only **Iness Is** and naught else - for, having no beginning, “**ne’er was Iness Naught**”! neither doth **I Am** know naught but comprehendeth all.

In short, **Conscious Reality** hath not spontaneously quick become alive, abiogenetically evolving from nothing...¹ emerging, as it were from a dream - an idealistic infant emerging from the primal egg of unbeing - but being, *in reality*, something more than an accident - no! the sentient universe is not an accidental aberration of nature... the sum of all its parts... which is why we conclude that no one of these things came first or second, but that they existed always... harmonically resonating throughout the dimensions - rising to the empyreal zenith of ever-loving joy and falling into the dark hidden places of the silent depths of fear and anguish.

No Agreement

These and many other cosmogonic and theogonic questions have been addressed, throughout the history of mankind, first by the myths, and later by philosophy, religion, and science. However, in spite of all extraordinary efforts and sometimes genial presentations of the subject, no general agreement has ever been reached. On the contrary: the legion

¹ **Abiogenesis** - original evolution of life or living organisms from inorganic or inanimate substances; another term for *spontaneous generation* - the *supposed* production of living organisms from nonliving matter, as inferred from the apparent appearance of life in some supposedly sterile environments.

of cosmogonies and theogonies has continually increased since the dawn of human civilization up to our days; and among the Greeks, as among other peoples belonging both to the past and to the present, there have circulated through time myths, beliefs, theories, and all kind of speculations concerning the origin of the world and the gods, and the nature of them all.

Theogony and Cosmogony Separated

An ingenious and rather successful device, to which both **science** and later religions have resorted to when addressing these issues, has been to *separate Cosmogony from Theogony and Creation from Procreation*, making the **Cosmos** just *a theatrical stage or three-ring circus where immortals and mortals may perform their deeds*. In some later philosophical and religious views, the **Cosmos** is, except for that which is biologically alive, a lifeless scenery, either created by a *demiurge* or by *a single godling*. Science, which has reached farther than any other discipline in systematically describing and explaining *natural phenomena*, is not seldom seen approaching the issue of the origin of **Cosmos** in our days with the help of pseudomythical images such as **Superdensity** or **Big-Bang**, which attempt to explain how the **Cosmos** evolved but not its coming to being. Likewise, expressions like "Long ago ..." or "Once upon a time ..." have been, on the ground of observations, rephrased by scientists and transformed into "Some two thousand million years ago", or similar.

Highest Authorities Disagree

As a result, **Existence "itself"** has not been accounted for, and the highest authorities disagree so radically that anyone could suspect the unavoidable works of **Discord**. For in the course of history, some have said that there are many gods, and others that there is only one single God. Still others have said that there is neither gods nor any **God** at all. And concerning the *universe*, some have said that there is one, and others have declared that there are many. So, when it comes to this sort of question, only partial agreement is to be expected among mortals; and authorities do not only argue about the number of gods and universes, or whether they have come into being at a certain point, or whether they have existed eternally, but also about their nature. And so, for example, some have believed *that* the universe is a terrible place created and governed by some devil, whereas others have said that its constructor is good, the **cosmos** being "his" amazing work of art, or "he" being the **Cosmos "itself."** And since these discussions are endless, mortals either turn to themselves, or else start debating the **Soul**, whether it is mortal or immortal, or whether there is a soul at all. And since no agreement is reached in this issue either, they then, eager to see tangible results, might take **History** as their supreme teacher and turn to matters of social, economical and political organization. For these structures and functions are believed to be easier to grasp than those of the universe, and consequently, they reason, their endeavours might yield visible results; and these are never underrated.

The First to Describe the Beginning

Concerning *"the beginning"* - it has been discussed, not just the beginning itself, but also who was *the first to describe "it."* Some have thought *that* **Hesiod** was the first to systematically expose *the origin of the gods*; but others have said that the first to compose a genealogy of the gods was **Musaeus**,² who having been trained by

² **Musaeus of Athens** (Greek: Μουσαῖος, *Mousaios*) was a legendary *polymath*, philosopher, historian, prophet, seer, priest, poet, and musician, said to have been the founder of priestly poetry in **Attica**. He composed dedicatory and purificatory *hymns* and *prose treatises*, and *oracular responses*.

In 450 BCE, the playwright **Euripides** in his play *Rhesus* describes him thus, "Musaeus, too, thy holy citizen, of all men most advanced in lore." In 380 BCE, **Plato** says in his *Ion* that *poets are inspired by Orpheus and Musaeus but the greater are inspired by Homer*. In the *Protagoras*, **Plato** says *that* Musaeus was a *hierophant* and a *prophet*. In the *Apology*, **Socrates** says, "What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again."

According to **Diodorus Siculus** [4.25.1-2], Musaeus was the son of Orpheus, according to **Tatian** he was the disciple of Orpheus, but according to **Diogenes Laërtius** he was the son of Legendary Thracian King *Eumolpus* (q.v.).

Alexander Polyhistor, **Clement of Alexandria** and **Eusebius** say he was the teacher of Orpheus. **Aristotle** quotes him in Book VIII of his *Politics*: "Song is to mortals of all things the sweetest." According to **Diogenes Laërtius** he died and was buried at **Phalerum**, with the epitaph: "Musaeus, to his sire Eumolpus dear, in Phalerean soil lies buried here." According to **Pausanias** [25.8], he was buried on the **Mouseion Hill**, south-west of the **Acropolis**, *where there was a statue dedicated to a Syrian*. For this and other reasons, **Artapanus of Alexandria**, **Alexander Polyhistor**, **Numenius of Apamea**, and **Eusebius** [*Praeparatio Evangelica* IX] identify Musaeus with Moses the Hebrew law-bringer. Musaeus is singled out in Book 6 of *The Aeneid* [6.667], as someone who the *souls of Elysium* particularly looked up to.

Mythology regards **Eumolpus** as the founder of the *Eleusinian mysteries*, and as the *first priest of Demeter and Dionysus*; the goddess herself taught him, Triptolemus, Diocles, and Celeus, the *sacred rites*; moreover, he is *therefore* sometimes described as having himself *invented the cultivation of the vine and of fruit-trees in general*. Later, poems and writings on the mysteries were fabricated and circulated under his name. The difference in the traditions about Eumolpus led some of the ancients to suppose that two or three persons of that name ought to be distinguished.

Diodorus Siculus (Greek: Διόδωρος Σικελιώτης *Diodoros Sikeliotes*) (fl. 1st century BCE) or **Diodorus of Sicily** was a Greek historian. He is known for writing the monumental universal history *Bibliotheca historica* (between 60 and 30 BCE), much of which survives. It is arranged in three parts. The first covers *mythic history up to the destruction of Troy*, arranged geographically, describing regions around the world from Egypt, India and Arabia to Greece and Europe. The second covers *the Trojan War to the*

Apollo and the **Muses** wrote songs and poems, uttered oracles, and besides *“he could fly.”* Also **Linus**—son of the **Muse Urania** either by **Apollo**, or by **Hermes**, or by **Amphimarus** (*son of Poseidon*)—is said to have composed a poem describing the creation of the world in which he declared *that* all things were originally together, until **Mind** set them in order. Also **Orpheus** is named among the first who concerned themselves with the *origin of the godlings, aliens, spirits, djinn, angels, etc...* and the *creation of the world*. But on the ground that he charged the immortals with all *human suffering*, some have refused to give him any credit, saying that Orpheus was not killed by women but punished by Zeus, who slew him with his thunder. The evidence, they say, was the epitaph in Orpheus’ tomb:

“Here have the Muses laid their minstrel true,
The Thracian Orpheus whom Zeus’ thunder slew.”

Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.4.5

Most Humans Think about it

In the same manner, some have said that certain ancient peoples—other than the **Greeks**—were the first to explain the origin of the world and the gods. So, for example, the **Egyptians**—who ignoring the true form of the divinities symbolically represented them in the shape of animals—were known for having declared *that matter be the first principle*, establishing that the **four elements (fire, air, water, and earth)** derived from it, and that *all living species* were produced after them. But the Egyptians considered the **sun** and the **moon** godlings, and the **universe** as a **sphere**, both created and perishable. The **stars**, they said, were made of **fire**, and they believed *that* the moon is eclipsed when it falls into the earth’s shadow, and that the **soul survives death** and is reborn. The Egyptians gave physical explanations to all other phenomena and so, for example, they believed that **rain** is caused by change in the atmosphere.

In the *Argonautica Orphica*, attributed to **Orpheus**, **Chronos** (Time) was the first to exist - and from him came **Aether** and **Eros** - and from Eros came **Nyx**. According to **Aristophanes**, *The Birds* 683ff., **Chaos**, **Nyx**, **Erebus** and **Tartarus** were the first to exist, and an **Egg** laid by Nyx in Erebus from which was born **Eros - Mother of Birds**, who caused all things to mingle. **Hesiod** says that **Chaos**, a *“Gaping Chasm,”* was the first to come into being, and after him came **Nyx**, **Gaia**, **Erebus**, **Tartarus**, and **Eros**; amongst Nyx’s offspring were **Aether** and **Hemera**, fathered by Erebus; Gaia mothered **Typhon** of Tartarus, but bare *the mountains* herself, as well as **Pontus** and **Uranus**. **Hyginus** says that **Mist** existed before **Chaos** - and Chaos fathered **Hemera** and **Aether** - who sired **Gaia**, **Pontus**, and **Uranus**... and **Nyx** and **Erebus** - from whom came the **Moerae** and **Hesperides**, **Hypnos**, **Geras**, **Thanatos**, **Styx**. *etc...* and the *origin of the cosmos* is philosophically explained by **Plato** [*Timaeus* 40e] as the result of the planned actions of a **constructor** or **demiurge**: (Uranus and Gaia gave birth to Oceanus and Tethys, parents of Phorcus, and Cronos and Rhea - who gave birth to Zeus and Hera, *etc...*). The prominence of **Oceanus** is *also* confirmed by **Hera**, who speaks of him as being the progenitor of the gods:

“For I am faring to visit the limits of the all-nurturing earth, and Oceanus, from whom the gods are sprung...”
(Hera to Aphrodite, Homer, *Iliad* 14.201)

Ovid (43 BC - AD 17), *Metamorphoses* 1.1:

First there was what men called Chaos: a rough unordered mass of things.

But God or Nature:

Rent asunder land from sky, and sea from land, and separated the ethereal heavens from the dense atmosphere. Then
he set them each in its own place and bound them fast in harmony.

Moulded the earth into the form of a mighty ball and bade the waters to spread abroad, to rise in waves, and fling
themselves around the shores of the encircled earth.

Then did he bid plains to stretch out, valleys to sink down, woods to be clothed in leafage and mountains to arise.

Cut the earth in zones: the central is hot, deep snow covers two, and two he placed in between and gave them a
temperate climate.

Air being lighter than fire and water lighter than earth, the creator bade the mists and clouds to take their place in the
air like winds, lightning and thunderbolts. But he divided the winds in order.

Then the stars began to gleam throughout the sky. So the stars occupied the floor of heaven, the sea fell to the fishes
for their home, earth received the beasts, and air the birds.

Then man was born of his own divine substance, or perhaps the earth still retained some elements of its kindred sky.

And though all animals fix their gaze upon the earth, he gave to man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect and
turn his eyes to heaven.

Flavius Philostratus (fl. c. 200 CE):

According to certain traditions the **cosmos** is composed of **four elements: fire, air, water, and earth**. To these, some have added a fifth—**ether**—of which the gods are made; for, *they say, just as mortal creatures inhale air, so do deities inhale the ether*. The **elements** came into being simultaneously, and not one-by-one, just as living creatures are

death of Alexander the Great. The third covers the period to about 60 BCE. **Bibliotheca**, meaning *“library,”* acknowledges that he was drawing on the work of many other authors.

Numenius of Apamea was a Greek philosopher, who lived in Apamea in Syria and Rome, and flourished during the latter half of the 2nd century CE. He was a **Neopythagorean** and forerunner of the **Neoplatonists**.

born complete, and not bit-by-bit. The *universe* is *a living creature*, neither male nor female, and through commerce with itself brings forth all creatures, fulfilling the role both of mother and father. This is so, *they add*, because *this living creature (the universe) is possessed by a love for itself greater than the love that any creature can have for another*. And this love knits the universe together in harmony. The *universal creature* shepherds itself, not with a single hand, but with many inscrutable ones, and great calamities occur, as a corrective, when justice is disowned by men. The creature appears to have been created by **a supreme God**; yet its many parts are governed by subordinate gods:

“... we may well assent to the statements of the poets, when they say that there are many gods in heaven and many in the sea, and many in the fountains and streams, and many round about the earth, and that there are some even under the earth.”

Flavius Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 3.34-35.